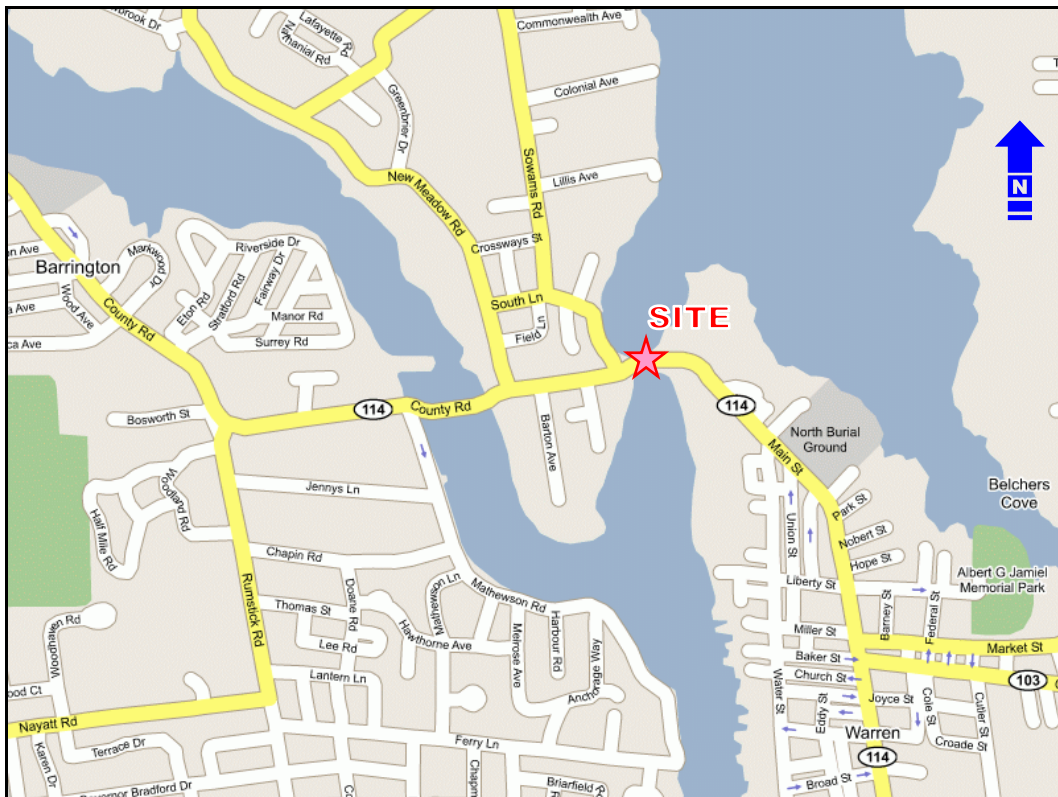


Site No. 4

## PALMER RIVER BRIDGE

Barrington / Warren  
State Route 114 (County Road / Main Street)



## Site Description

## Location Assessment

Water uses to the north are limited to light recreational boating, as salt marshes along the upper Palmer River have limited shoreline development in this cove environment. Waters south of the Palmer River Bridge are more heavily used for recreational boating, with several marinas and mooring areas lining the Warren, Palmer, and Barrington Rivers. Commercial fisheries facilities and a municipal wastewater treatment plant are located further down the Warren River along the easterly shoreline.

**Land Location.** The site is located within a densely developed area of the East Bay / Bristol County. Land uses in the vicinity are primarily residential (particularly in Barrington), though light commercial uses are present along County Road, Main Street and Water Street (see locus map). Built on the footprint of an old railroad line, the East Bay Bike Path is a linear public recreational facility extending from East Providence to Bristol, shared uses of which include

cycling, walking, and rollerblading. A Narragansett Electric maintenance facility is to the immediate southeast of the Palmer River Bridge; immediately beyond which is the Samsonite luggage manufacturing building, a large mill-type structure (see Photo 5).

*Environmental Constraints and Permitting.* The area south of the Palmer River Bridge consists of riprap seawalls with smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) growing as a fringe among the rocks with several docks built along the edge of water. The area north of the bike path bridge is a salt marsh surrounded by open water. The coastal feature is the rip rap seawalls, and the area in the vicinity of the bridges is classified by the CRMC as Type 3 (High-Intensity Boating) waters. There is no known eelgrass in this area.

### Facilities Assessment

As previously noted, fishing from both the old Palmer River Bridge and the Temporary Route 114 Bridge is prohibited and posted as such. While demolition and replacement of the old Palmer River Bridge is scheduled to begin in 2006, it is likely that fishing from the replacement structure will also be prohibited due to inherent safety issues with motorized traffic.

Recreational fishing at the site is supported by the East Bay Bike Path Bridge, which features raised-deck sidewalks (see Photos 2, 3) along both sides which serve to delineate fishing and path uses. While the path itself appears to be handicap accessible, there are currently no accessibility features allowing handicap access to fishing along the raised-deck sidewalks. Fishing and bike path uses appear able to coexist along the bridge, however fishing at the site requires a greater degree of caution in line casting, reeling, etc. (as noted by anglers at the time of visit), particularly when both uses are heavy. At most times fishing is only feasible from one side of the bridge due to the swift tidal currents through the bridge channel. Chain link fence lines both bridge railings at the center channel to prohibit fishing from interfering with boating uses along the Palmer River (see Photo 7). With no time-of-day access restrictions at the site, the Bike Path Bridge is often a popular spot for night fishing.

This timber structure itself is in fair condition and exhibits signs of deck wear from use. The RIDOT is currently in the preliminary design phase of a project to replace both the Barrington and Palmer River Bike Path Bridges.

Use of the site is mostly limited to residents of neighboring communities due to the lack of viable parking near the bridges, as there are no public parking lots with a ½ mile radius of the site. The nearest on-street parking is located along Main Street, Water Street, and other side streets in Warren, on which the parking demand is also shared by residents and commercial uses. Parking is also possible (but unauthorized) in the parking lot of the Samsonite building during its hours of operation (Photo 8).



### Existing Site Conditions

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Existing Fishing Facilities			X	
Parking	X			
Compatibility with Surrounding Land / Water Uses		X		
Statewide Transportation Accessibility / Public Transit			X	
Site Aesthetics			X	
	Low	Medium	High	
Water Quality (see Appendix B)	X			

#### Priority for Capital Improvements: **Medium**

Though sharing use with East Bay Bicycle Path, the Bike Path Bridge over the Palmer River currently provides good access to the quality recreational fishing at this location. As noted, the RIDOT Bridge Engineering section is currently in the preliminary design phase for the replacement of this structure. This process presents an excellent opportunity to further improve upon the fishing infrastructure of the site through the inclusion of enhanced safety, handicap accessibility, and fishing-amenable features in the replacement design, most of which could be provided at a low additional cost to the State. If both structurally feasible and cost-effective, better-defined separation of fishing and path uses could also be achieved through the provision of wider sidewalks in the bridge cross-section. Given that there are no other spots in the immediate vicinity which offer comparable-quality access to fishing along the Palmer River, it is highly recommended that the RIDEM coordinate with the RIDOT in this design process to ensure that quality fishing accessibility will continue to be offered along the new Bike Path Bridge.

It is also important to consider that approximately ½ mile east of the site, the Bike Path Bridge over the Barrington River is a near-identical facility and is also slated for replacement by the RIDOT. Accordingly, it would be prudent for the state to maintain fishing access (and consider similar improvements thereto) in the replacement design of this structure as well. This further underscores the need for coordination between the RIDEM and the RIDOT in developing the optimal replacement design of both structures.

Public parking remains a limitation of the Palmer River Bridge site with no readily apparent solution. The Samsonite building currently has ample parking space which far exceeds current use of the facility; future use of this lot could conceivably be possible through acquisition, use agreement, easement, etc. It is however important to note that use of the current fishing structure appears to be maximized, as the Bike Path Bridge still reaches capacity at peak times despite the lack of public parking in the area. Given the limited extent to which other fishing improvements can be incorporated at the site (apart from those that could be incorporated in the new bridge design), the acquisition/development of additional parking may not be warranted or cost-effective.



**Photo 1.** Palmer River Bridge (left) and Temporary Route 114 Bridge looking west from Warren side.



**Photo 2.** Looking west along East Bay Bike Path Bridge.



**Photo 3.** Looking east along East Bay Bike Path Bridge.



**Photo 4.** Bike Path crossing at Sowams Road (Barrington) looking east.





**Photo 5.** Looking southeast to Bike Path Bridge from the Barrington shoreline. The Samsonite Building is visible in the background.



**Photo 6.** Palmer River and Temporary Route 114 Bridges looking east from Barrington side.



**Photo 7.** Raised sidewalk along the north side of the Bike Path Bridge.



**Photo 8.** Samsonite parking lot located southeast of bridges in Warren.